

STATE  
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PARKS®

June 2010

NINETY SIX NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

A Resource Assessment



National Parks Conservation Association®  
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

# STATE ♦ OF THE ♦ PARKS®

Center for State of the Parks®

More than a century ago, Congress established Yellowstone as the world's first national park. That single act was the beginning of a remarkable and ongoing effort to protect this nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage.

Today, Americans are learning that national park designation alone cannot provide full resource protection. Many parks are compromised by development of adjacent lands, air and water pollution, invasive plants and animals, and rapid increases in motorized recreation. Park officials often lack adequate information on the status of and trends in conditions of critical resources.

The National Parks Conservation Association initiated the State of the Parks program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks, and determine how well equipped the National Park Service is to protect the parks—its stewardship capacity. The goal is to provide information that will help policymakers, the public, and the National Park Service improve conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

For more information about the methodology and research used in preparing this report and to learn more about the Center for State of the Parks, visit [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks) or contact: NPCA, Center for State of the Parks, P.O. Box 737, Fort Collins, CO 80522; phone: 970.493.2545; email: [stateoftheparks@npca.org](mailto:stateoftheparks@npca.org).

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

- \* More than 325,000 members
- \* Twenty-three regional and field offices
- \* More than 120,000 activists

A special note of appreciation goes to those whose generous grants and donations made this report possible: G.D.S. Legacy Foundation, Ray Bingham, Ben and Ruth Hammett, Lee and Marty Talbot, and anonymous donors.

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Cover photo: The historic Logan Log House at Ninety Six National Historic Site. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

## INTRODUCTION



The Ninety Six settlement—in present-day western South Carolina—grew at the junction of the Cherokee Path and another unnamed trail during the early years of the 18th century. The well-worn Cherokee Path allowed traders to travel from settlement to settlement and helped Ninety Six become a hub of trading activity between American Indians, frontiersmen, and colonists. While there are several stories explaining how the place was named,

the most accepted is that it denotes the estimated distance, in miles, from the area to the important Cherokee town of Keowee. By the mid-18th century, Ninety Six had evolved into an important post for English colonial forces heading into the interior, providing supplies for soldiers and refuge for settlers. It also served as a garrison on the road to Fort Prince George (located on the Keowee River across from Keowee, near present-day Clemson, South

Waysides placed throughout Ninety Six National Historic Site interpret park resources like the remains of the historic Star Fort. Today, the earthen fort is threatened by erosion and park staff are working to better protect it.

## NINETY SIX NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AT A GLANCE

- **Historic cultural resources:** Ninety Six National Historic Site contains a Revolutionary War battlefield where two separate sieges occurred, several 18th-century historic structures (e.g., the Star Fort, the American Siegeworks, the Stockade Fort, the Island Ford Road, the Gouedy grave site, and more), and a museum collection and archives that boast more than 39,000 items.
- **Dynamic natural resources:** The park harbors an array of natural resources such as rare plant and tree species, including populations of Oglethorpe oak, eastern narrowleaf sedge, slender looseflower sedge, and American columbo; more than 130 resident bird species; five bat species; three fish species that are listed as South Carolina conservation priority species; and a number of habitats and ecosystems that support these and many other plant and animal species.
- **Recreational activities:** Ninety Six offers a number of opportunities for visitors to explore the park and learn more about the events that took place there during the colonial era and Revolutionary War. The park also offers an auto loop tour, approximately 10 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, and bird-watching opportunities (park habitats are a haven for migratory birds, especially waterfowl). In 2009, the park developed and installed new interpretive waysides, including metal cutouts throughout the park and a brick plaza at the park entrance, to help educate visitors about the area's history. The park's 29-acre Star Fort Pond is managed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for recreational fisheries. Fishing is allowed at Star Fort Pond on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from April 1 to November 1, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.

Carolina). Robert Gouedy purchased 250 acres of land near Ninety Six in 1751. He became one of the area's most influential residents, opening a trading post and eventually owning more than 1,500 acres of land and several plantations and farms.

Throughout the mid-1700s the area continued to grow in both size and importance. Under the direction of South Carolina Governor William Lyttleton, a makeshift fort named Fort Ninety Six was constructed using Robert Gouedy's house, trading post, barn, and outlying buildings. Built in one week in December 1759, Fort Ninety Six served as a significant backcountry stronghold between Fort Prince George and Loudon, South Carolina. It is not known what became of Fort Ninety Six. The first village of Ninety Six began to grow about 500 yards north of the Gouedy settlement, along the Island Ford Road. A courthouse and jail were built in 1772, as Ninety Six became the seat of a newly established judicial district.

At the onset of the Revolutionary War, backcountry South Carolina residents were divided into two partisan camps—those supporting King George III and those who wanted independence from the British. In July 1775, the South Carolina Council of Safety—a provisional government in Charleston that supported independence—had ordered a shipment of gunpowder seized and held at the fort at Ninety Six. This sparked the first Revolutionary War siege at Ninety Six as Loyalists responded by taking up arms. The siege took place in November 1775, when more than 1,900 Loyalist forces led by Captain Patrick Cunningham and Major Joseph Robinson attacked militia commander Major Andrew Williamson and 562 men barricaded inside a hastily built fort that would later become known as Williamson's Fort. This marked the first major land battle of the Revolutionary War south of New England. Williamson was forced to surrender after three

days of fighting. Before departing with his men he was permitted to burn the fort and fill the well, though the fort's swivel guns remained in place. The town remained under Loyalist control until the arrival of British forces in June 1780, who refortified the area by building the Stockade and Star Forts as well as several earthworks—temporary earthen structures for the purposes of attack or defense (e.g., redans, redoubts, artillery batteries, and blockhouses).

The newly fortified outpost soon came under fire from Patriot forces under General Nathaniel Greene. Greene's forces numbered just 500 Continentals (nonconscripted regular soldiers who were paid), 400 Virginia militiamen, and some North Carolina volunteers, going against a heavily fortified British compound manned with approximately 550 British soldiers. The siege began on the evening of May 21, 1781, and lasted for 28 days—the longest siege of the American Revolution. Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee's Continental legion arrived on June 8 from the victory at Augusta and concentrated on the Stockade Fort. On June 18, Lee successfully took the Stockade Fort, but Greene was not as successful and eventually decided that the Star Fort was too strong to be taken and retreated. The British were able to regain the Stockade Fort, but the Continentals had succeeded in exhausting the Star Fort's supplies. By July the British were forced to abandon and destroy the Stockade and Star Forts, as well as the village of Ninety Six, so that the Patriots could not use them. Though Greene did not succeed in taking the fort, he had won a strategic victory, and by forcing the British out of Ninety Six, was able to limit British control of South Carolina to areas near the coast.

Following the siege, some of the residents of Ninety Six began to rebuild near the site of the destroyed village. The town of Cambridge was established in 1783 near the location of the former Stockade Fort. However, Cambridge suffered several setbacks over the next few decades: loss of the judicial seat to Abbeville,

South Carolina; a flu epidemic; the closing of its college in 1825; and the routing of a railroad through a nearby town. By the 1860s the area was all but abandoned.

Interest in the old Ninety Six site was rekindled in 1878 after a group of prominent citizens gathered there to commemorate the Revolutionary War events. Interest continued to mount during the 1920s and again in the 1960s. In 1976, Congress established Ninety Six National Historic Site, encompassing the remains of the 1780 forts, the Gouedy trading site, the original village site, and historic road traces, to preserve and commemorate South Carolina's early colonial history and the events that took place at the site during the American Revolutionary War. Today the 1,022-acre park protects and interprets significant historic cultural resources in a vibrant natural setting consisting of hardwood forests, floodplain canebrakes, and cattail marshes.

Visitors to Ninety Six can explore the park's myriad resources along the paved historic interpretive trail, a one-mile loop that begins and ends at the visitor parking lot.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

### RATINGS

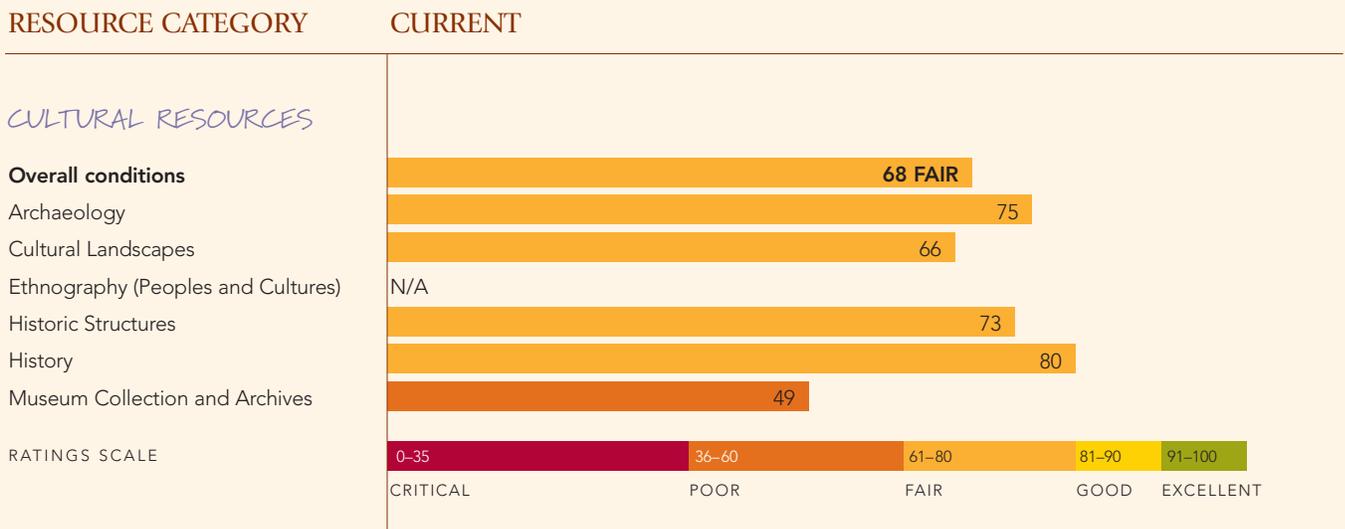
In recognition of the important historical resources protected within Ninety Six National Historic Site, the National Parks Conservation Association’s Center for State of the Parks conducted an assessment to determine current conditions of the park’s resources. Based on this assessment, the overall condition of the park’s known **cultural resources** rated a “fair” score of 68 out of 100. The scores for cultural resources are based on the results of indicator questions that reflect the National Park Service’s own *Cultural Resource Management Guideline* and other policies related to cultural and historical resources. Ethnography was not rated because the park does not have an ethnography program and ethnography is not included in any of the park’s planning documents.

Challenges facing the park’s cultural resources include invasive non-native species that have altered the Revolutionary War-era appearance of the battlefield, erosion that is damaging the park’s historic road traces, and soil compaction, loss of vegetation, and

erosion on earthworks from visitors leaving the walking trails. Park successes include newly installed interpretive waysides, a new interpretive film, and a recently completed cultural landscape report.

This assessment did not rate the overall condition of the park’s **natural resources** because only 35 percent of the information required by the Center for State of the Parks assessment methodology was available. Based on what is known, challenges to the park’s natural resources include invasive non-native plant species, lack of regular fire, and the near disappearance of certain park habitats (e.g., floodplain canebrakes) due primarily to lack of fire. The overgrowth of trees that resulted from years of fire suppression has diminished the habitat for native cane. Ninety Six does not have any natural resource staff; to guide management of natural resources, the park relies on the information gathered by National Park Service’s Cumberland Piedmont Inventory and Monitoring Network.

Note: For Ninety Six National Historic Site, 100 percent of the cultural resources information for the rated categories was available.



The findings in this report do not necessarily reflect past or current park management. Many factors that affect resource conditions are a result of both human and natural influences over long periods of times, in many cases pre-dating the park’s creation. In addition, some park resources can be affected by factors that are outside the park and beyond the National Park Service’s control. The intent of the Center for State of the Parks is not to evaluate National Park Service staff performance, but to document the present status of park resources and critical ongoing efforts to protect them.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

MATT KANIA

- 1 Tour stop
- Walking tour trail (paved)
- Other trail (unpaved)
- V Patriot siege trenches
- ★ Loyalist Star Fort
- Site of historic structure  
Some historic structures are marked on the ground with colored posts.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Additional archaeological research needed to determine locations of important sites.** Until the specific locations of sites such as the Gouedy settlement, structures that comprised the village of Ninety Six, unknown military burial sites, and trenches at the Stockade Fort are determined through comprehensive archaeological investigations, park staff cannot write or implement resource management plans because maintenance of the landscape and historic structures may cause ground disturbance and damage to unidentified archaeological resources. The park's plans to treat the landscape with prescribed burns have also been put on hold pending archaeological surveys. Park staff have requested Park Service funding for several archaeological surveys, which will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the landscape, enhance park interpretation with new information, and enable staff to better manage all resources.
- **Updated management plans needed.** Ninety Six National Historic Site has a few management plans that are out of date, including the historic resource study (1979), historic structure report (1979), general management plan (1981), and administrative history (1988). Updating these plans will elucidate current management needs as well as provide guidance and treatment for historic structures.
- **Museum collection and archives face serious challenges.** Museum and archival storage and preservation practices need to follow the guidelines set out in the park's 2005 museum collection management plan. For example, the plan provides guidance on storing prints, negatives, slides, paper documents, newspapers, maps, plans, and drawings, and it details methods for eliminating silverfish (small, wingless insects) and dealing with mold. The plan also addresses the backlog of uncataloged items and outlines necessary updates to storage and museum exhibits to ensure historic items are properly protected. The park does not have adequate staffing (e.g., curator, archivist, or museum technician) or funding to implement these changes, so they have requested funding for a museum technician to assist with these projects.
- **New visitor center needed.** The current visitor center was built as a temporary structure in 1984, but it is still in service. The visitor center is poorly insulated, with an inadequate HVAC system, and is not designed to museum standards. In addition, staff feel that this building is inadequate for interpreting the park for visitors, is not large enough to host the number of visitors it receives, and does not provide staff with adequate work space (only two small offices exist, which quickly become overcrowded). Park staff have requested Park Service funding to build a new visitor center to correct these deficiencies and are also working with the nonprofit Palmetto Conservation Foundation to locate funding for an improved facility.
- **Invasive non-native plant species threaten park ecosystems.** There are 70 species of non-native plants found at Ninety Six; of those, 17 are invasive and could pose a significant threat to the overall ecological integrity of the park due to their ability to displace native species. Species targeted for control efforts include golden bamboo, chinaberry, European privet, kudzu, Japanese honey-

suckle, Japanese stiltgrass, Johnsongrass, mimosa, Russian olive, cherry silverberry, and wisteria. The National Park Service's Southeast Regional Exotic Plant Management Team, along with park staff and volunteers, provide most of the effort to remove invasive non-native plant species by focusing on target species in especially sensitive areas such as riparian zones.

- **Erosion affecting park resources.** Visitors venturing off park trails and routine maintenance activities, combined with the current drought gripping the region, contribute to erosion that threatens the park's cultural resources. Erosion is a major threat to the park's historic earthen fortifications. The park completed a cultural landscape report in 2009, which addresses erosion's impact on the Star Fort, historical road traces and restored trenches; restoration of affected resources; and future prevention.
- **Staff seeking funds to research connections to African Americans and American Indians.** Despite the lack of a formal ethnography program, Ninety Six staff understand the importance of expanding the park's interpretation program to include information about African Americans and American Indians who were part of the region's history and who participated in the historical events that occurred in the area. To gain more information, park staff have requested Park Service funds to complete archaeological research on a suspected African-American cemetery and an area used by American Indians. Once this research is completed, it can be used to present a more inclusive interpretation of historical events that took place at Ninety Six. The research might also indicate the need for an ethnography program at the park.



The park is working with the nonprofit Palmetto Conservation Foundation to raise funds to construct a new visitor center that includes exhibit space and museum artifact storage areas, provides additional work space for staff, and improves visitor experience.

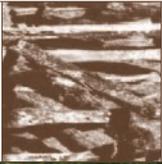
## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Cultural landscape report was recently completed.** Private consultants completed a cultural landscape report for Ninety Six in June 2009. The cultural landscape report provides a site history, an assessment of resource conditions, and recommendations for caring for the cultural landscape.
- **Park has new interpretive film.** Ninety Six has a new interpretive film titled *Ninety Six: Crossroads of a Revolution* that is shown daily at the visitor center to help visitors better understand the park story. This film replaced the original park film that was completed in the 1970s.
- **Volunteers are essential to successful living-history program.** Each year more than 200 volunteers donate 3,000 hours at Ninety Six National Historic Site, assisting primarily with the living-history program. Most volunteers participate in demonstrations depicting the life of the Cherokee and colonial settlers.
- **Park receives assistance with invasive plant control.** Each year, the Park Service’s Southeast Region Exotic Plant

Management Team assists the park with removal and control of invasive non-native plants. In 2009, \$10,000 from the federal economic stimulus package further supported the park’s efforts to control non-native plant species.

- **Partnerships are a key component of resource protection.** Ninety Six has an excellent partnership with the nonprofit Palmetto Conservation Foundation. Currently, the park is working with the group to acquire funding for a new visitor center, to develop an action plan for landscape restoration, and to plant native grasses to protect the earthen fortification of Star Fort from further erosion. The park also receives assistance from the National Park Service’s Cumberland Piedmont Inventory and Monitoring Network (CUPN). Since Ninety Six does not have any natural resource staff, the work of CUPN staff has greatly enhanced park knowledge of plants, animals, and water and air quality.
- **Ninety Six is home to rare tree.** South Carolina’s largest population of Oglethorpe oak, a state-listed species of concern due to its rarity, is believed to be located within Ninety Six. Two hundred to 300 individuals have been documented within the park, and the population appears to be stable. Oglethorpe oaks are believed to be affected by disease, including chestnut blight, and its habitat—poorly drained bottomland—has been drastically altered over the past 200 years. Very little is known about any other habitat requirements for this rare oak.

Ninety Six National Historic Site	
<b>Park location</b>	Western South Carolina, 12 miles east of Greenwood
<b>Park size (acres)</b>	1,022
<b>Park establishment</b>	1976
<b>Recreational visits (2009)</b>	50,689



## THE NINETY SIX NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE ASSESSMENT



### CULTURAL RESOURCES—HISTORIC EVENTS INTERPRETED

Ninety Six National Historic Site preserves and interprets the cultural resources relating to two main topics—colonial life in the area leading up to the Revolutionary War (especially the system of trade that developed between American Indians and settlers) and the two Revolutionary War battles that took place in

1775 and 1781. The park's significant cultural resources include earthworks, historic road traces (i.e., a road that is no longer in use but its route is still at least partly visible), archaeological sites and artifacts, historic structures, and commemorative monuments.

Volunteers present living-history programs, including musket firing demonstrations, for visitors at Ninety Six National Historic Site.

A paved walking path meanders through Ninety Six's cultural landscape, which includes historic structures, interpretive waysides, and natural resources.



KENNETH WATSON

### CULTURAL LANDSCAPES—ENTIRE PARK IS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Cultural landscapes are places where people have interacted with their surroundings, shaping them to meet their needs. They are also places where the natural surroundings have influenced people's lives and actions. Ninety Six National Historic Site has one identified cultural landscape that encompasses the park and includes all the resources relating to the Revolutionary War, the Gouedy settlement and trading post, the villages of Ninety Six and Cambridge, the historic road traces, and the commemorative monuments. Staff from the Park Service's Southeast Regional Office help guide the management and protection of the park's cultural landscape.

In June 2009, two private firms—Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. and John Milner Associates, Inc.—completed the park's cultural landscape report, arguably its most important cultural landscape management document. This report provides park staff with a site

history, an assessment of landscape conditions, and a management and treatment plan. Specifically, the Ninety Six cultural landscape report addresses vegetation and natural resource management (e.g., removing trees, thinning vegetation, and protecting slopes from erosion by maintaining a healthy vegetative cover); it also discusses protecting historic structures and road corridors by removing noncontributing buildings that detract from the landscape as well as rerouting walking paths to avoid sensitive archaeological resources, earthworks, and historic road traces.

The major threats to Ninety Six's cultural landscape are invasive non-native plant species (e.g., kudzu, privet, wisteria, and bamboo); park-wide erosion, especially of the historic road traces and earthworks; and wireless communication towers along park boundaries that mar the historic viewshed and make it difficult for the park to interpret the Revolutionary War events. Invasive plant species are problematic because they obscure historic lines of sight

and make it difficult for visitors to imagine the positions of troops. Erosion washes away the park's historic cultural landscape and uncovers artifacts, leaving them susceptible to weathering, decay, and illegal collection by pothunters.

The historic traces of Island Ford Road and Hard Labor Road, both 18th-century roads, have suffered from compaction and erosion for the past two and a half centuries and are now at least five feet below the surrounding grade. Erosion and compaction have left the Charleston Road trace deeply carved into the earth as well. Erosion and compaction change the appearance and character of these features, which leads to loss of historic integrity and ability to convey their meaning and importance to visitors. The location of the park's walking paths could be contributing to erosion and compaction concerns. Some of the park's walking paths actually cross historic road traces and some are located very near to historic earthworks. Visitors who stray from the walking path and onto the earthworks compact the soil and denude vegetation, which can exacerbate erosion. Drought has killed grass that once anchored soil, and disturbances caused by necessary park maintenance work have also contributed to erosion and loss of vegetation. The park is working with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation to plant native grasses to protect the Star Fort from further erosion. A plan is needed to comprehensively address erosion impacts, restoration, and prevention. Specific examples to address erosion issues include stabilizing road cuts and rerouting walking paths.

In addition to the threats posed by invasive species and erosion, the location of wireless communication towers can affect the park's cultural landscape and visitor experience. In 2004, a wireless communication tower was built adjacent to the park, altering the viewshed experienced by 18th-century inhabitants of the Ninety Six area. Since this tower was built, park staff have successfully petitioned the local city

council to prevent the construction of any additional communication towers near the park in an attempt to protect the viewshed.

Also of concern to park managers is the fact that there is land not currently included within park boundaries that is important to the history and interpretation of the events at Ninety Six. For example, the Charleston Road trace is unprotected after it leaves the southern boundary of the park. This road trace is still very much intact but suffers from off-road vehicle travel and timber removal, which degrade its historic character and threaten archaeological features that may be present. The legislative boundaries for the Ninety Six National Historic Site allow for an additional 20 acres to be acquired for the park, and several acres of the Charleston Road would be the top priority for acquisition should they become available for purchase.

Youth Conservation Corps participants help the park during the summer, working on projects such as building split rail fences.



### HISTORIC STRUCTURES—PARK CONTAINS AN ARRAY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

Ninety Six National Historic Site contains historic structures ranging from an 18th-century fort to historic road traces, memorials and markers, and the grave site of James Gouedy, Robert Gouedy's son. Nine structures are listed on the National Park Service's List of Classified Structures (LCS) for Ninety Six:

- **Star Fort:** This earthen fort was constructed in 1780-1781 by area slaves, Loyalists, and British troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John H. Cruger. The fort was destroyed when the British were forced to abandon the area after the 28-day siege. Still visible today are the fort's parapet walls, one of the ditches that provided protection for slaves bringing supplies from the village during the siege, and a traverse wall that provided protection and allowed people to safely move around inside the fort.

Portions of the Stockade Fort, which guarded the water supply and western approaches of the town of Ninety Six, were reconstructed in the 1960s.

- **Stockade Fort:** The Stockade Fort, which guarded the water supply and western approaches of the town of Ninety Six, was built by the British in 1780 at the site of the old Williamson's Fort. The Stockade Fort was destroyed in 1781 after Patriot General Greene and his men laid siege to it. Today a reconstruction of the Stockade Fort, built in the 1960s, stands in the park.
- **American Siegeworks:** Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a Polish engineer, built the American Siegeworks (earthen trenches) between May 22 and June 16, 1781, to provide cover for Patriot troops and to allow them to move artillery close to their target. These trenches were uncovered during archaeological investigations, were partially reconstructed, and are now visible to visitors.
- **Island Ford Road:** This is a continuation of the Charleston Road that extended north to the Saluda River crossing. The first village of Ninety Six grew along this thoroughfare.



- James Gouedy grave site: James Gouedy—the son of Robert Gouedy, one of Ninety Six’s most prominent early residents—is buried within the park. His grave is located along the Gouedy Trail.
- Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Revolution Marker: In 1925, DAR erected this marker along Highway 248 in recognition of the location as an important Revolutionary War site.
- James Birmingham Memorial: In 1975, the Star Fort American Legion Post built this memorial near the Stockade Fort in recognition of the first South Carolinian Patriot to perish during the Revolutionary War.
- James and Henrietta Mayson Grave Sites: James and Henrietta Mayson lived in the Ninety Six area at the time of the siege. James had been the leader of the local Regulator Movement, a group of backcountry settlers organized in 1767 to maintain law and order. They were reinterred near the DAR Revolution Marker in 1939.
- DAR Marker with Swivel Gun: This marker, which features an 18th-century cast iron swivel gun centered on the top, was erected by DAR in 1954 to commemorate the 1781 siege.

The List of Classified Structures indicates that the Stockade Fort, DAR Revolution Marker, James Birmingham Memorial, and DAR Marker with Swivel Gun are in “good” condition, and the remaining structures are in “fair” condition, as of 1995. These ratings will be updated in the near future. Additional historic structures at the park that are not listed on the LCS include several historic road traces (i.e., Cherokee Path, Charleston Road, and Hard Labor Road) and the Logan Log House. The Cherokee Indians established the path that bears their name to facilitate trade. The Cherokee Path passed through the Ninety Six area on its way from the



NANCY WILLIAMS

Congaree’s territory to the prominent Cherokee town of Keowee, a distance of more than 150 miles. The Cherokee Path is still visible today and is maintained by the park to a minimum width of six feet. The Charleston Road ran from the city of Charleston to just south of the village of Ninety Six, where it intersected with the Cherokee Path. The Logan Log House was built sometime around 1787 in Greenwood, South Carolina. The Star Fort Historic Commission moved the structure to Ninety Six in 1968, before the park was established as a national historic park. Today, the structure serves as a setting for living-history programs.

The park’s historic structures are components

A reconstructed rifle tower helps park visitors get a sense of the dynamics of the 28-day siege on Star Fort in 1781.

of its cultural landscape, and several threats—erosion of earthworks and historic road traces and concerns related to placement of park paths near historic features—were mentioned in the preceding “Cultural Landscapes” section. Additional threats include rotting of wooden structures (e.g., Stockade Fort building and Logan Log House) and general deterioration that occurs due to exposure to the elements. Ninety Six staff have requested Park Service funds to protect the park’s historic structures, including projects to restore the Stockade Fort building, replace the rotted floor and porch of the Logan Log House, and stabilize the park’s deteriorating monuments.

The park’s historic resource study and historic structure report were completed in 1979 and are outdated; updating these plans will outline current management needs as well as provide guidance and treatment for the historic structures.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY—PARK NEEDS SURVEYS

Ninety Six National Historic Site and some adjacent land not within the park (but associated with historical events) have 41 known archaeological sites that have been listed in the National Park Service’s Archeological Sites Management Information System database. Thirty-seven of the sites are listed in “good” condition, one is listed as “fair,” and three have not been evaluated because the resources are not located on Park Service property. The park’s pre-eminent archaeological resources include the remains of Star Fort, the village of Ninety Six, the reconstruction of the Stockade Fort, the communication trench that ran between the town of Ninety Six and the Stockade Fort, the Gouedy settlement and trading post, the Island Ford Road/Charleston Road, and the Cherokee Path.

Ninety Six has completed some important archaeological research and has several management documents (e.g., the 2003 archaeological overview and assessment and a 1996 archaeo-

logical study), yet additional studies are needed to determine exact locations of the Gouedy settlement, possible slave quarters that might have existed there, the trading post, structures that comprised the village of Ninety Six, unknown military burial sites, trenches at the Stockade Fort, and the Cambridge village. Until the locations of archaeological resources are known, park staff cannot fully protect or interpret these resources. This lack of knowledge also prevents the park from developing a maintenance plan for cultural resources because any preservation or maintenance activity might disturb buried archaeological resources. The park has requested Park Service funding for several archaeological surveys to locate the resources listed above, but no funds have yet been received.

Artifact hunters and erosion that exposes artifacts threaten the archaeological resources at the park. To curb illegal collection of artifacts and damage to resources exposed by erosion, newly installed interpretive waysides teach visitors about the importance and fragility of archaeological resources and encourage them to report any resources that have been exposed.

#### MUSEUM COLLECTION AND ARCHIVES—IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR EXHIBIT AND STORAGE SPACE

Ninety Six National Historic Site’s museum collection and archives contain more than 39,000 items. Archaeological artifacts such as musket balls comprise the bulk of the collection and most of these items are in storage at the Park Service’s Southeast Archeological Center in Tallahassee, Florida, and at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. The items that remain in the park are displayed in a small museum located inside the visitor center or are in a curatorial storage cabinet in the administrative building. Displayed items include hand-blown wine glasses and colonoware (earthenware produced by free and enslaved African Americans during the 18th and 19th centuries).



KENNETH WATSON

Most of the displayed items are on loan from private parties; for example, the McClung Museum in Knoxville, Tennessee, has loaned the park several contact period Cherokee artifacts, while the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology has loaned the park several colonial-era artifacts to display. The park also displays several hundred Revolutionary War-era artifacts on long-term loan from a private collector, Merle McGee of Greenville, South Carolina. These items include buttons, cuff links, musket balls, shot, hats, swords, bone dice, and children's toys. Of the park's 15,203 museum collection items, 9,533 have not been cataloged. Working off of notes and photos of the items, park staff are making progress on the backlog by cataloging items, but the park's small staff does not have a lot of time to devote to this work. During 2007, 578

archaeological items were cataloged.

High temperatures, humidity, corrosion, and dust threaten museum objects and archives housed at the park. The park does not have temperature, climate, and humidity control systems, ultraviolet light protection, or a fire suppression system to protect museum objects and archives. Additional shortcomings include a lack of museum collection and archives management and protection plans (e.g., a security survey, a fire protection survey, a collection storage plan, an integrated pest management plan, or a formal housekeeping plan) and a lack of dust- and insect-proof exhibit cases that are accessible to children or visitors in wheelchairs. Park staff have requested Park Service funding to build a new visitor center that includes exhibit space and museum artifact storage areas that meet curatorial standards; additional work

The Star Fort chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution erected this monument in 1925 to commemorate Ninety Six's rich history, including the two Revolutionary War battles.

The park has several reproduction Revolutionary War-era cannons, such as this brass three pounder. Trained staff and volunteers fire the cannons during living-history events.

space for staff would also be included in a new visitor center. Until a new visitor center can be built, the park could implement several suggestions outlined in its museum collection management plan, including digitizing outdated and/or deteriorating media types so they will be preserved and accessible, eliminating insect and mold infestation within the archives through temperature control, labeling and organizing digital media, and establishing cold storage for photographic materials. Additional staff and/or project funding is needed to complete these improvements. Since the park's historian retired in 2008, there have been no park staff assigned to curatorial duties.

The park has requested funding for a museum technician.

Ninety Six National Historic Site's archives face a serious challenge; 83 percent of the park's 23,825 archival materials have not been cataloged. At current funding and staffing levels the park is only able to catalog a small number of items each year: During 2008 and 2007, 66 and 295 archival items were cataloged, respectively. The museum collection management plan offers guidance for preserving the archives and making them publicly available, but these recommendations as well as those for improving museum object management have not been implemented because of a lack of staffing and funding.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Volunteers in period costumes demonstrate what family life was like during the colonial period.

*ETHNOGRAPHY—INTERPRETATION LIMITED; FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED*

Ethnography is the area of anthropology that focuses on the study of individual human cultures. The National Park Service ethnography program seeks to identify and represent contemporary people with cultural or historical attachments to park land or who rely on it for subsistence. At Ninety Six, American Indians played a significant role in the development of the area through trade with British and American settlers and were involved in several skirmishes predating the American Revolution as well. Ninety Six National Historic Site does not currently have an ethnography program and ethnography is not addressed in any of the park's planning documents because ethnographic themes are not

included in the park's establishing legislation. However, park staff recognize and interpret the vital role that American Indians played in the park's history, and they currently interpret the Cherokee and Keowee trading routes to a small degree. Park staff have requested Park Service funds to complete some projects with ethnographic ties, such as a survey to locate a suspected African-American cemetery, an archaeological survey of American Indian sites, efforts to conserve artifacts associated with African Americans and American Indians, and an archaeological survey to locate the whereabouts of possible slave quarters at the Gouedy plantation complex. Together, this information could form the foundation of a future ethnography program at the park.



Along with nationally significant historic structures and cultural landscapes, Ninety Six National Historic Site contains rich natural resources that the Park Service works to preserve.

#### NATURAL RESOURCES—PARK HARBORS RARE PLANT SPECIES

Ninety Six National Historic Site preserves a cultural landscape and historic resources within a natural setting that is home to native plants and wildlife. The park's natural resources include populations of several rare plant and fish species, as well as a healthy population of bat species and many bird species, including some that are of special concern due to declining populations. Based on available information, issues that affect the park's ability to protect its natural resources include invasions by non-native plants, a history of fire suppres-

sion that has altered plant species composition, and a lack of on-site natural resource staff to address these and other concerns. To gather information on the park's natural resources, staff rely on experts from the Park Service's Southeast Regional Office and Cumberland Piedmont Network of the Inventory and Monitoring Program.

*PARK HABITATS—VARIETY OF ECOSYSTEMS FOUND WITHIN NINETY SIX* Ninety Six National Historic Site contains at least 18 plant communities. Seven of these are natural communities that comprise just one-third of the park acres. The remaining acres are

comprised of non-native and invasive plant species. The park's natural communities include several hardwood forest types, floodplain canebrake and southern cattail marsh. Some of the park's most ecologically significant habitats are the floodplain canebrakes—dense thickets of giant cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) that are now scarce. Historically this habitat was widespread throughout the area, but it is now rare due to fire suppression and lack of heavy grazing by wild and domesticated animals. The absence of these two sources of disturbance has allowed for tree growth that pushes the canebrakes out. Today the remaining floodplain canebrakes are remnant patches located underneath the canopy of forest bottomlands. Restoration of floodplain canebrakes will likely require tree thinning and regular fire treatments to these areas. Park staff are working to re-establish fire into the park's ecosystems using prescribed burns in order to help native plant species, reduce dangerous fuel loads, and begin to restore park scenery to its historic (1770–1780) appearance.

#### PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES—PARK HARBORS SEVERAL RARE SPECIES

Although Ninety Six National Historic Site does not house any federally listed threatened or endangered species, the park does contain several species of rare plants and fish. For example, the park is thought to be home to South Carolina's largest population of rare Oglethorpe oak (*Quercus oglethorpensis*). The first Oglethorpe oak was discovered in 1940 by a botanist in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, and he named the tree accordingly. The county was named for General James Oglethorpe, the founder of the colony of Georgia in 1732. Oglethorpe oaks in the park number 200 to 300 individuals, a population that appears to be stable. The park harbors several other rare plants, such as eastern narrowleaf sedge (*Carex amphibola*) and slender looseflower sedge (*C. gracilescens*), which are South Carolina species

of concern, as well as American columbo (*Frasera caroliniensis*), which is considered a regional species of concern. Species of concern are those species that might be in need of some kind of conservation action, such as monitoring or possible listing as threatened or endangered, often due to their rarity or declining status. American columbo is a flowering perennial herb that was extensively used by American Indians as an antiseptic as well as a remedy to treat a wide range of ailments such as indigestion, colic, and dysentery. Populations of this herb are only found in Greenwood County in South Carolina. Additional rare plant species found within the park include green fringed orchid (*Platanthera lacera*), Virginia snakeroot (*Aristolochia serpentaria*), squarestem spikerush (*Eleocharis quadrangulata*), bearded skeletongrass (*Gymnopogon ambiguus*), and Canadian licorice-root (*Ligusticum canadense*).

Of the 22 species of fish known to inhabit the one lake and three streams at Ninety Six National Historic Site, three are conservation priorities for South Carolina: rosyface chub (*Notropis rubescens*), flat bullhead (*Ameiurus platycephalus*), and Carolina darter (*Etheostoma collis*). The state's Department of Natural Resources can take management action for a species that is recognized as a conservation priority.

Fifteen species of terrestrial mammals have been documented within park boundaries. All of these animals are considered to be common and widespread (e.g., mice [*Peromyscus* spp.], white-tailed deer [*Odocoileus virginianus*], and gray fox [*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*]). Ninety Six has a diverse population of bats; five species have been found within the park—big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), eastern red bat (*Lasiurus borealis*), Seminole bat (*L. seminolus*), evening bat (*Nycticeius humeralis*), and hoary bat (*L. cinereus*). These populations appear to be healthy and productive as several bats were either pregnant or lactating when captured during a 2007 survey.

One hundred and thirty-seven species of birds have been documented in the park, including 31 species recognized by Partners in Flight (a partnership of federal and state agencies, industry, and non-governmental organizations, among others) as being of special concern due to loss of habitat. Prescribed burns and other land management techniques (e.g., mechanical thinning with a mulching machine or chainsaw to remove smaller diameter tree species) designed to restore the natural forest structure and habitats of the park would improve the park's ability to support additional bird species. The park has also installed nesting boxes to attract breeding eastern bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) and wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*).

Thirty-one species of amphibians and reptiles have been found at Ninety Six National Historic Site, including yellow-bellied water-snake (*Nerodia erythrogaster flavigaster*), marbled salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*), green treefrog (*Hyla cinerea*), cricket frog (*Acris gryllus*), red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), and painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*). These species are found in several habitats within the park, including the one-acre Little Pond and the 27-acre man-made Star Fort Pond. The Star Fort Pond also supports an alligator that was a former pet someone released into the lake.

#### NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANTS—A GROWING CONCERN

More than 350 species of plants have been recorded at Ninety Six National Historic Site, including 70 non-native species (17 of which are considered to pose a significant risk to native species). These invasive non-native plants include golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*), chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*), European privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*), mimosa (*Mimosa* spp.), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), cherry silverberry (*Elaeagnus multiflora*),

and wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis* and *W. floribunda*), which are all candidates for control. Wisteria is currently being controlled by the park through hand removal and herbicide application. Bamboo was treated in 2007 by the Park Service's Southeast Region Exotic Plant Management Team. This four-person crew works within Ninety Six each year for up to one week to assist the park with invasive non-native species removal and control. In 2009, the park received \$10,000 from the federal economic stimulus package to hire a four-person Youth Conservation Corps crew to remove invasive non-native plant species as well.

#### PREScribed BURN PROGRAM—CONTROLLED BURNS ON HOLD UNTIL SURVEYS COMPLETED

Park staff would like to reintroduce fire into the park's ecosystems with a prescribed burn program. Historically, fire was a regular occurrence in the area as American Indians used fire to manage habitats and encourage the growth of vegetation that attracted game animals. Fire was also used to clear vegetation near the forts. Prescribed burning would benefit the park's natural resources in several ways: It would reduce the amount of hazardous underbrush fuels, simulate the natural fire regime, control non-native vegetation (especially privet), initiate nutrient cycling, and maintain the historic landscape. Although the park does have a fire management plan (2003), prescribed burns have been put on hold until after an archaeological survey for the park has been completed. Almost 700 acres of the park will be included in the prescribed burning program once the surveys are completed. Treated areas will be burned on a three-year schedule. In the meantime, the park is working with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation to develop a plan to thin vegetation within the park and on a program to reduce the amount of highly flammable underbrush.



## STEWARDSHIP CAPACITY

### FUNDING AND STAFFING— SEVERAL KEY POSITIONS NEEDED

For fiscal year 2010, Ninety Six National Historic Site's operational budget was \$478,000. This funding supports four full-time staff—a chief ranger, an interpretive ranger, and two maintenance workers; three seasonal employees; and half the salaries of the park's superintendent and administrative officer, which are shared with Cowpens National Battlefield. After salaries, the small remaining funds are allocated toward overhead and projects (e.g., utilities and repairs). Park staff have made funding requests

to address the archival backlog, hire a museum technician, construct a new visitor center, and to complete archaeology and ethnographic projects, as well as historic preservation work.

The park's small but knowledgeable staff receives assistance with archaeological research, planning, and site stewardship from the Cultural Resources Division of the Southeast Regional Office and archaeologists from the National Park Service's Southeast Archeological Center in Tallahassee, Florida. University of South Carolina archaeologists—namely Stanley South, who conducted exploratory investigations in the 1970s and who recently contributed reports regarding future archaeological

Volunteers of all ages help park staff make history come alive during Ninety Six's living-history programs.

surveys—have also helped park staff care for resources. Park staff also have access to several historians who have contributed historical research, including professor emeritus Dr. Bobby Moss of Limestone College and Dr. Marvin Cann of Lander University.

To further boost the park's ability to fully research, protect, and interpret resources, several key staff positions are needed. These include permanently filling the recently vacated historian position and hiring a part-time museum professional to catalog backlogged items and update the park's artifact storage and museum exhibits.

*PLANNING—CULTURAL LANDSCAPE  
REPORT COMPLETED;  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS NEEDED  
TO INFORM FUTURE PLANS*

Park staff rely on numerous planning documents to guide resource management and interpretation. Some of the most recently completed plans used to guide park activities include a 2009 cultural landscape report, a 2005 museum collections management plan, a 2002 archaeological overview and assessment, and a 2001 long-range interpretive plan. The park has several outdated studies and reports, such as the

historic resource study and historic structure report written in 1979, the 1981 general management plan, the 1985 scope of collection statement, and the 1988 administrative history. Updates are needed to guide resource protection work. Additional guidance is needed for the museum collection and archives, including a collection storage plan, an integrated pest management plan, as well as a formal house-keeping plan. Park managers would also like to develop a park-specific comprehensive maintenance plan for cultural resources that includes explanations of why the prescribed maintenance and preventative treatments are needed. Before any resource plans can be written or implemented, the park needs to conduct archaeological surveys to ensure that no artifacts will be disturbed during any resource management activities.

*RESOURCE EDUCATION—EARLY  
AMERICAN HISTORY INTERPRETED FOR  
VISITORS*

Ninety Six National Historic Site interprets the park's cultural and natural resources in a number of ways: within the visitor center, which displays historic artifacts and a collection of Revolutionary War items; through a recently

Interpretive waysides placed throughout the park help visitors understand the history of the area and the resources before them.



completed 10-minute interpretive video; via ranger-led history tours and living-history demonstrations; and along a one-mile paved walking trail. The trail is outfitted with an audio walking tour, which can be rented at the visitor center. The park also offers the Gouedy Trail and Cherokee Path Trail, which have both been outfitted with new interpretive waysides that incorporate current scholarship. Younger visitors can participate in the Junior Ranger program, where they learn about the history of the park as they complete fun activities within the Junior Ranger book that is available at the visitor center. The park also holds an event each November called "A Backcountry Holiday," where costumed interpreters at the Logan Log House demonstrate how colonial-era residents celebrated the winter holidays.

The park needs a new visitor center to accommodate larger groups, such as bus loads of schoolchildren that visit the park. The current structure was erected in 1984 as a temporary structure that can hold just 20 people at one time. The park is currently partnering with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation to acquire funding for a new visitor center.

#### EXTERNAL SUPPORT—LOCAL RESIDENTS ASSIST STAFF WITH THE PARK'S LIVING-HISTORY PROGRAM

With such a small staff, Ninety Six National Historic Site relies on volunteers to help bridge the gap between what is needed and what staff can accomplish. Each year, more than 200 volunteers donate 3,000 hours to helping the park, particularly assisting with the living-history program. Each summer, volunteers with the park's friends group, Volunteers 96, help bring to life the Cherokee and colonial settlers who once lived in the area. The park also receives natural resource assistance from volunteers. One local resident, Rusty Wilson, monitors the park's natural resources and has even discovered populations of rare species within the park.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A volunteer regiment wearing replica period clothing pose during one of the park's living-history programs. For information on how to become a volunteer, contact the park.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

- **Support or become a member of a group helping to protect the park**, such as the park's friends group, Volunteers 96 ([www.nps.gov/nisi/supportyourpark/joinourfriends.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nisi/supportyourpark/joinourfriends.htm)), the Palmetto Conservation Foundation ([www.palmettoconservation.org](http://www.palmettoconservation.org)), or NPCA ([www.npca.org/support\\_npca](http://www.npca.org/support_npca)).
- **Volunteer.** Many parks are looking for dedicated people who can lend a helping hand. To learn about opportunities at Ninety Six National Historic Site, contact the park at 864.543.4068.
- **Become an NPCA activist and learn about legislative initiatives affecting parks.** When you join our activist network, you will receive *Park Lines*, a monthly electronic newsletter with the latest park news and ways you can help. Join by visiting [www.npca.org/takeaction](http://www.npca.org/takeaction).



## APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

To determine the condition of known cultural and natural resources at Ninety Six National Historic Site and other national parks, the National Parks Conservation Association developed a resource assessment and ratings process. The assessment methodology can be found online at NPCA's Center for State of the Parks website: [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks).

Researchers gather available information from a variety of research, monitoring, and background sources in a number of critical categories. For natural resources, more than 120 discrete elements associated with environmental quality, biotic health, and ecosystem integrity are assessed. Environmental quality and biotic health measures address air, water, soil, and climatic change conditions, as well as their influences and human-related influences on plants and animals. Ecosystems measures address the extent, species composition, and interrelationships of organisms with each other and the physical environment. For Ninety Six National Historic Site, just 35 percent of the information required by the methodology was available, so natural resource conditions were not rated.

The scores for cultural resources are determined based on the results of indicator questions that reflect the National Park Service's own *Cultural Resource Management Guideline* and other Park Service resource management policies.

For this report, researchers collected data and prepared technical documents that summarized



ASHLIE K. CONWAY

The historic route of Charleston Road, called the Gouedy Trail within the park, runs over 170 miles from Ninety Six to the city of Charleston.

the results. The technical documents were used to construct this report, which underwent peer review and was also reviewed by staff at Ninety Six National Historic Site prior to publication.

NPCA's Center for State of the Parks represents the first time that such assessments have been undertaken for units of the National Park System. Comments on the program's methods are welcome.

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